



# Painting Is for Preservation

*By BMCS(SW/IAW) Danny Tidwell,  
Naval Safety Center*

**W**hy does the Navy paint so much? It's not to fill holes or gaps where metal or wood are missing, nor to "glue" together equipment. Paint is not meant to hold in place nuts, bolts, locking devices, or toggle pins. Sailors paint to preserve surfaces and maintain material condition of the equipment being painted.

All material aboard Navy ships requires preservation because salty seawater and ocean weather aren't exactly preservation-friendly. Paint is a sealant against the ocean's elements because it seals wood pores and steel. Paint thus arrests decay and helps prevent rust. When properly applied to prepared surfaces, paint also maintains a smart appearance and contributes to general shipboard cleanliness and, when dry, offers a smooth, washable surface. Paint is also used for temperature control because different colors reflect, absorb, or redistribute light.

To get paint's full benefits, specific pre-application steps must be followed. The surface to

be painted must be free of old paint, oil, dirt, rust, and other debris. Paint also only adheres to dry surfaces.

Paint only as required to prevent corrosion or where existing paint has deteriorated. Use the touch-up method instead of a complete paint job, if possible. Why prepare and paint a whole area when only a small area needs it? Remember, though, that the captain ultimately determines how extensive a paint job is needed.

Meanwhile, identify potential problem areas before painting. Be sure the surface area is prepared and that you'll be using the right paint for the surface about to be painted: Different paints adhere differently to various types of surfaces.

Should a paint question arise or you need other guidance, refer to NSTM 631, Preservation of Ships, to equipment technical manuals, or read your maintenance requirement card. 🌀